CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An automated telephone assistant device, comprising:

a base unit in communication with a telephone network, wherein the base unit is operable for executing a first algorithm disposed within the base unit and selectively allowing a telephone call received from the telephone network to be transmitted to a telephone handset belonging to a user and selectively preventing the telephone call received from the telephone network from being transmitted to the telephone handset belonging to the user.

2. The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, further comprising an extension control device in communication with the base unit, wherein the extension control device is associated with a predetermined telephone extension and assists the base unit in selectively allowing the telephone call received from the telephone network to be transmitted to the telephone handset belonging to the user and selectively preventing the telephone call received from the telephone network from being transmitted to the telephone handset belonging to the user.

3. The automated telephone assistant device of claim 2, wherein the base unit and the extension control device communicate via a plurality of signals, wherein the plurality of signals direct the extension control device to generate a ring event for the telephone handset associated with the predetermined telephone extension.

4. The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein a power source is disposed within the base unit, the power source operable for generating a ring event.

5. The automated telephone assistant device of claim 2, wherein a power source is disposed within the extension control device, the power source operable for generating a ring event.

6. The automated telephone assistant device of claim 2, wherein the base unit further comprises a second algorithm operable for detecting the presence of and identifying the extension control device.

7. The automated telephone assistant device of claim 6, wherein the base unit further comprises a third algorithm operable for assigning a common name to the extension control device.

8. The automated telephone assistant device of claim 7, wherein the base unit further comprises a permanent storage device operable for storing the identity and the common name of the extension control device.

9. The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the base unit further comprises a dual-tone multi-frequency interface operable for allowing the user to control the base unit and modify the first algorithm.

10. The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the base unit further comprises a voice interface operable for allowing the user to control the base unit and modify the first algorithm.

11. The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the base unit further comprises a voicemail message that is selectively transmitted to callers.

12. The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the first algorithm is operable for identifying a caller.

13. The automated telephone assistant device of claim 12, wherein the first algorithm is operable for selectively allowing the telephone call received from the telephone network to be transmitted to the telephone handset belonging to the user and selectively preventing the telephone call received from the telephone network from being transmitted to the telephone handset belonging to the user based upon the identity of the caller.

14. The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the first algorithm is operable for selectively allowing the telephone call received from the telephone network to be transmitted to the telephone handset belonging to the user and selectively preventing the telephone call received from the telephone network from being transmitted to the telephone handset belonging to the user based upon the time of day.

15. The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the first algorithm is operable for selectively allowing the telephone call received from the telephone network to be transmitted to one or more telephone handsets in one or more predetermined locations in a structure belonging to the user based upon the time of day and selectively preventing the telephone call received from the telephone network from being transmitted to the one or more telephone handsets in the one or more predetermined locations in the structure belonging to the user based upon the time of day.

16. The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the first algorithm is operable for selectively allowing the telephone call received from the telephone network to be transmitted to the telephone handset belonging to the user and selectively preventing the telephone call received from the telephone network from being transmitted to the telephone handset belonging to the user based upon the entry of an authorization code by a caller.

17. The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the first algorithm is operable for selectively allowing the telephone call received from the telephone network to be transmitted to the telephone handset belonging to the user and selectively preventing the telephone call received from the telephone network from being transmitted to the telephone handset belonging to the user based upon the recognition of a caller's voice.

18. The automated telephone assistant device of claim 1, wherein the base unit is operable for directing the telephone handset belonging to the user to produce a plurality of ring tones, each of the plurality of ring tones associated with the ascertained identity of a caller.

19. The automated telephone assistant device of claim 2, wherein the extension control device is operable for providing a common connection to a plurality of telephone lines.

20. An automated telephone assistant method, comprising:

providing a base unit in communication with a telephone network;

disposing a first algorithm within the base unit;

executing the first algorithm;

selectively allowing a telephone call received from the telephone network to be transmitted to a telephone handset; and

selectively preventing the telephone call received from the telephone network from being transmitted to the telephone handset.

21. The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, further comprising providing an extension control device in communication with the base unit, wherein the extension control device is associated with a predetermined telephone extension and assists the base unit in selectively allowing the telephone call received from the telephone

network to be transmitted to the telephone handset and selectively preventing the telephone call received from the telephone network from being transmitted to the telephone handset.

22. The automated telephone assistant method of claim 21, further comprising directing the extension control device to generate a ring event for the telephone handset associated with the predetermined telephone extension.

23. The automated telephone assistant method of claim 21, further comprising disposing a second algorithm within the base unit, the second algorithm operable for detecting the presence of and identifying the extension control device.

24. The automated telephone assistant method of claim 23, further comprising disposing a third algorithm within the base unit, the third algorithm operable for assigning a common name to the extension control device.

25. The automated telephone assistant method of claim 24, further comprising storing the identity and the common name of the extension control device within a permanent storage device disposed within the base unit.

26. The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, further comprising allowing a user to control the base unit and modify the first algorithm via a dual-tone multi-frequency interface.

27. The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, further comprising allowing a user to control the base unit and modify the first algorithm via a voice interface.

28. The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, further comprising selectively transmitting a voicemail message to callers.

29. The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, wherein the first algorithm is operable for identifying a caller.

30. The automated telephone assistant method of claim 29, wherein the first algorithm is operable for selectively allowing the telephone call received from the telephone network to be transmitted to the telephone handset and selectively preventing the telephone call received from the telephone network from being transmitted to the telephone handset based upon the identity of the caller.

31. The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, wherein the first algorithm is operable for selectively allowing the telephone call received from the telephone network to be transmitted to the telephone handset and selectively preventing the telephone call received from the telephone network from being transmitted to the telephone handset based upon the time of day.

2. The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, wherein the first algorithm is operable for selectively allowing the telephone call received from the telephone network to be transmitted to one or more telephone handsets in one or more predetermined locations in a structure belonging to a user based upon the time of day and selectively preventing the telephone call received from the telephone network from being transmitted to the one or more telephone handsets in the one or more predetermined locations in the structure belonging to the user based upon the time of day.

33. The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, wherein the first algorithm is operable for selectively allowing the telephone call received from the telephone network to be transmitted to the telephone handset and selectively preventing the telephone call received from the telephone network from being transmitted to the telephone handset based upon the entry of an authorization code by a caller.

34. The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, wherein the first algorithm is operable for selectively allowing the telephone call received from the telephone network to be transmitted to the telephone handset and selectively preventing the telephone call received from the telephone network from being transmitted to the telephone handset based upon the recognition of a caller's voice.

35. The automated telephone assistant method of claim 20, further comprising directing the telephone handset to produce a plurality of ring tones, each of the plurality of ring tones associated with the ascertained identity of a caller.